



BOH MEETING MINUTES 02-07-2022

Council Committee Room, 140 Main Street
Jim Griffin, Chair
Joseph Tennyson, MD, Vice-Chair
Phillip Short, Member (absent)

Also in attendance: Director John Garside and Clerk Tina Nolin

Meeting called to order 6:30 pm.

Reading and Approval of Minutes

- Minutes for the January 10th and January 13th meeting: Vice-Chair Tennyson motioned to approve and place the minutes on file. Chairman Griffin seconded the motion; motion passed with 2-0 vote.

New Business

- **Discussion & Update of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
Director Garside updated the Board on the recent activities of the Health Department regarding COVID-19.

Clinic outreach activities:

Since the last meeting, COVID-19 Vaccine clinics have been conducted at Bethel Presbyterian Church, a pop-up at the Brazilian Steak Grill, and two clinics at Jericho Hill Lodge. In the coming month (February 2022), the department will have clinics every Wednesday at City Hall in Memorial Hall. There will also be a pop-up this Wednesday at Dunkin Donuts, 330 Boston Post Road East this week, and the following week we anticipate a clinic at Welly's Restaurant, 153 Main St.

Vaccinations:

Marlborough is up a percentage point since last week, 85 % of the population in the city has had at least one dose, 74% are fully vaccinated, and 34% have gotten their booster, also up a percentage point.

In-Home Rapid Test Kit Program

Our Rapid In-Home Test Kit giveaway continues with help from Human Services and the Community Cupboard, as well as the City Clerk's and Collector's offices, the COA, and MEDC. We have also reached out to our various churches and offered them rapid tests. Finally, we have also given away test kits at our vaccine clinic events.

COVID-19 CASES

Today, we have 53 active cases, a 96% reduction from our January 8th high, roughly a month ago. These are case numbers that we last similarly saw in November 2021.

Our average daily active case number over seven days is 79. As a reminder, the cases we are reporting are the PCR confirmed cases and may not reflect results from in-home tests, but they certainly reflect the downward trend.

Marlborough Public Schools have a total of 11 cases, down from a high of 81 back on January 6, 2022. AMSA has 1 case, and Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School has zero.

The most recent MWRA Wastewater COVID-19 Viral RNA Data also shows a continuing decline, suggesting infection is down.

Dr. Tennyson reported that there are much fewer cases being seen at the hospital, and there is significantly less volume overall at the hospital.

Dr. Tennyson also reported on the *R-naught* (inherent reproductive rate) and the R_t (effective reproduction number, which reflects the state of any particular pandemic or endemic event). At our last meeting, the R_t was 1.44, meaning that every person who had COVID-19 at that time was likely to infect 1.44 other people. As of today, our R_t is 0.45. Whenever the R_t is below 1.0, it means that things are winding down and not spreading. The last time we saw it this low was in January 2020, right before we had the first big spike, before it was even recognized as a pandemic.

- **Discussion Regarding the Continued Requirement for the Emergency Regulation Requiring Face Coverings in Indoor Public Spaces**

Before starting the discussion, Chairman Griffin commended and thanked the Health Department for their work over the past several weeks with the mask order and the city business establishments, who took it seriously and upheld it in their businesses. He also commended the citizens of Marlborough, who, regardless of their views on the matter, stepped up and did a tremendous job over these last few weeks. The chairman also commented that Marlborough should be proud of what it has accomplished over these past few weeks.

Chairman Griffin summarized the data that he felt should be used to evaluate keeping or rescinding the city's mask mandate, specifically: 53 active cases out of a population of 43,500, the city's positivity rate is down now under 15%, and COVID-19 wastewater data continues to trend downward.

Dr. Tennyson added that the low R_t is another significant data point suggesting the numbers are truly down. He recommended, given the R_t number in the state and the numbers in the city, that the mandate be rescinded and moved to an advisory.

Director Garside presented a draft advisory for the Board to review. This advisory, if passed, would be messaged on the website, signage, cable TV, and social media. The

advisory would allow private businesses to determine their own policy if they still want masks to be worn in their establishments.

Director Garside also mentioned that in making the decision to rescind or keep the existing mask mandate, the Board should look at it holistically, in terms of the benefits of masking, as well as the potential negative effects of continuing a mandate, particularly as it pertains to mental health and a lack of normalcy.

Chairman Griffin and Vice-Chair Tennyson agreed that if they followed the science in determining to declare the mandate, they must continue to follow the science in determining whether to keep or rescind it.

Following some further discussion, Chairman Griffin motioned to rescind the mask mandate and to issues an advisory as proposed and discussed. Vice-Chair Tennyson seconded the motion; the motion passed with a 2-0 vote.

Scheduling of Next Meeting

The board's next regular monthly meeting will be on Monday, March 7th, at 6:30 pm.

ADJOURN

Chairman Griffin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 pm; Vice-Chairman Tennyson seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 2-0 vote.

Respectfully submitted,


James H. Griffin

3/7/2022
Dated

Cc: Board of Health Members
City Council, City Clerk, and City of Marlborough Website